

# Bulletin of the BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

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The six hundred and fifty-seventh meeting of the Club was held at the Rembrandt Hotel, London on the 18th February, 1969.

*Chairman:* Dr. J. F. Monk

Members present: 13; Guests 4.

Dr. C. H. Fry gave an illustrated talk on the bee-eaters and made some comments on the jacamars.

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The six hundred and fifty-eighth meeting was held at the Rembrandt Hotel on the 18th March, 1969.

*Chairman:* Sir Landsborough Thomson

Members present: 12; Guests 4.

"Some observations on the present state of palaeornithology" was the title of a talk given by Mr. James Fisher.

## Bird migration in Rumania

*by Dan Munteanu*

*Received 24th June, 1968*

The numerous attempts that European ornithologists have made to mark on maps precisely delimited migration routes have proved to be untrue to reality. That is why Boubier's "migration fans", often attacked on account of too broad a generality, still prove valid to-day, while the routes that many ornithologists (beginning with Palmen and Menzbier in the last century) described have not been properly corroborated so far. The fact is also significant that J. Dorst, in the second French edition (1962) of his excellent book *Bird Migrations*, omitted the reproduction of the map of Euroasian routes of migration which had been published in the first edition (1956).

The tendency of confining the broad migration streams to narrow routes has also been manifest in Rumania. In the Danube Delta alone some ornithologists believed there were six distinct routes: the East Elbic route, the Pontic route, the Carpathian route, the Sarmatian route, the Black Sea route as well as a route for Woodcocks. Referring to the country as a whole, L. Rudescu (1958) adds five other routes, of which one at least (the northern branch of the East Elbic route) has no real confirmation.

Therefore I have decided to attempt a simpler sketch of the migration directions through Rumania, working on the basis of Rumanian literature, data on ringed birds recaptured, personal observations and what is generally known of this problem abroad. In the sketch that follows my conclusions are shown superimposed on a sketch of the Carpathians mountain range, which, along with the Alps, has a remarkable influence on the European migration routes.

When analysing the autumn migration, one is immediately impressed by



The main autumn migration directions through Rumania.

the great affluence of birds in the east of the country (Moldavia, eastern Muntenia and Dobrudja). Migratory birds breeding between the Scandinavian peninsula to the west and the Caspian Sea to the east pass through this part of the country as through a funnel; so do migratory birds from northern and western Siberia. The Black Sea route, originating in the north of Aral Lake and of the Caspian Sea, has a well marked individuality but, before reaching Dobrudja, some of its secondary branches cross the Black Sea to Turkey.

The birds passing through the south-east of Rumania (approximately following the north-south direction) will either fly on through Asia Minor and Asia Anterior, or cross the Mediterranean in the Cyprus area.

The Eastern Carpathians are not an insurmountable barrier and birds from Central and South Russia, as well as Siberia, cross them and then stop for the winter in Yugoslavia, Italy, southern France or north-western Africa. Numerous birds from Transylvania, Crişana and Banat, which also go south-west, join them.

Migrants from the north-west (including White Storks and other Ciconiiformes, Bee-eater, Red-backed Shrike, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Blackcap, Golden Oriole, etc.) follow a direction that corresponds roughly to the route which originates in the Elba region, crosses the Panonnian plain and reaches the Balkan peninsula. These birds enter Rumania from the west, flying north-west to south-east, pass through the Banat region and then, some of them at least, go east, following the Danube valley to the east of Bulgaria. Others fly directly south through Serbia and Macedonia. Of the White Storks entering the Crişana region, some cross northern Transylvania and, looping around the Western Carpathians, fly on towards the south, crossing the Southern Carpathians at several points, mostly along the large valleys (the Olt valley, the Jiu valley, etc.). It then follows that a double crossing of

migration routes takes place in the western half of Rumania. Finally, the birds which have crossed Rumania from the north-west meet those coming from the east of the country in Bulgaria or farther south.

But there are some birds which migrate over almost the whole country in a north-south direction (it is not marked on the map). At least one species may be included in this category, the Woodcock, and maybe the Willow Warbler and the Siskin. The Crane follows the same direction not only in the east of Rumania, but also over the western plains of Crişana and Banat (more precisely NNE-SSW).

The situation is approximately reversed during the spring migration, but in certain species there are little route differences. The Woodcock, for instance, does not pass through the Danube Delta; White-fronted Geese cross the western country in incomparably smaller numbers than in autumn.

The views mentioned above refer to the general aspect of the migration and do not deny the existence of peculiar situations.

## Abnormal plumage variations in the Red-headed Weaver

by Bryan L. Sage

Received 19th December, 1968

A previous paper (Sage, 1965) described some plumage variations involving the loss of melanin pigments in the genus *Euplectes* (Ploceidae). The present paper deals with another of this family, the Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes* (*Malimbus*) *melanotis* (Lafresnaye) which occurs in Africa in two races. In breeding males of the more northern race *A. m. melanotis* the area of the eyes, ear-coverts, nostrils, lores and chin are black, and the outer edges of the flight feathers are scarlet. In the southern race *A. m. rubriceps* (Sundevall) in similar plumage there is little or no black in the facial area and the edges of the flight feathers are yellow, or occasionally pale orange. Individuals showing a tendency in plumage characters towards the other race occur within the distribution of each. In both races there is some variation in the degree of intensity of the crimson areas of the plumage, and often odd red or yellowish feathers occur in the black of the mantle. Generally speaking, it can be said that the northern race inhabits areas of fairly high rainfall, whilst the southern one is found in low rainfall areas.

I have examined three aberrant examples of this species representing one of the northern and two of the southern race as detailed below; all three are from the collection of the National Museum of Bulawayo:

N.M. no. 14745. Male, Rukwh, Tanzania, 25th November, 1953. 8° 20' S., 37° 40' E. An area of high rainfall of ca. 40 inches per annum.

Black of face normal; usual crimson of head, nape and breast replaced by cadmium-orange, becoming more yellow in tone on the breast; wing edgings yellow and not crimson.

N.M. no. 56518. Male, near Nata, Bechuanaland (now Botswana), 12th November, 1964. 20° 11' S., 26° 12' E. A low rainfall area with ca. 10-15 inches per annum.

Head (including face), nape, throat orange, becoming cadmium-yellow on the breast; wing edgings yellow.